

Public Health Notes

Volume 10 Issue 1

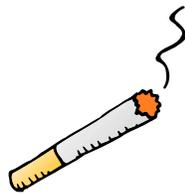
January–February 2015

NH DHHS Mission Statement: To join communities and families in providing opportunities for citizens to achieve health and independence.

New Year's Resolutions for a Healthier You in 2015

Quit Tobacco

Quitting tobacco is hard, but it is one of the best things you can do for your health. Smoking increases your risk for heart disease, stroke, and lung and other cancers. For those whose New Year's resolution is to quit smoking, they are in good company. It is a popular goal and many, many people succeed. Although 16.2% of New Hampshire adults currently smoke, there are more former smokers (31%) in New Hampshire. Planning ahead to quit tobacco use can help make this healthy resolution a reality. Two good resources to help people quit are www.TryToStopNH.org and 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669), where any resident can get free advice, counseling, support, and while supplies last, free patches.



Eat Healthy

Many people are confused as to what constitutes a healthy diet. While scientists continue to learn about human nutrition, there is much we do know.

Calories count and most of us consume more than we need. It is important also to eat a varied diet that includes all the nutrients your body requires. The more color in your diet, reds, greens, oranges, purples, the better. Most people don't eat enough fruits and vegetables and too much sugar, carbohydrates (starches such as bread and pasta) and trans fats. Whole grains are better than refined grains, and choose low-fat dairy whenever possible. Lean



Important Dates

- January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month*
National Cervical Cancer Coalition
www.nccc-online.org
- January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month*
March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation
www.marchofdimes.com
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov
- January 4-10 is National Folic Acid Awareness Week*
National Council on Folic Acid
folicacidinfo.org
- January 18-24 is Healthy Weight Week*
Healthy Weight Network
www.healthyweightnetwork.com
- February is American Heart Month*
American Heart Association
www.americanheart.org
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov
- National Cancer Prevention Month*
American Institute for Cancer Research
www.aicr.org
American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org
- February 6 is National Wear Red Day*
The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
Health Information Center
www.hearttruth.gov
Women Heart
www.womenheart.org
American Heart Association National Center
www.goredforwomen.org



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meats and seafood are good choices also.

Salt is something else that we tend to eat too much of. It is also labeled as sodium on food packages. Processed food (food that comes in a box or bag and has multiple ingredients) tends to have more salt.

It is also important to maintain a healthy weight. The key to a healthy weight and weight loss is long-term lifestyle changes that include eating right, regular physical activity, and balancing the number of calories you consume with what your body burns.

To learn more, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/.

Stay Active

Many studies have shown that exercise is important to not just heart health but our overall physical and mental well being. When we say exercise though, it doesn't have to be an hour on a piece of equipment at the gym. Walking the dog, gardening, taking the stairs, weight training, dancing, and yoga are all good ways to fit some physical activity into your day. Do what you enjoy and you're more likely to stay with it and make it a regular part of your life.

According to the *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, "Aerobic activities, also called endurance activities, are physical activities in which people move their large muscles in a rhythmic manner for a sustained period. Running, brisk walking, bicycling, playing basketball, dancing, and swimming are all examples of aerobic activities. Aerobic activity makes a person's heart beat more rapidly to meet the demands of the body's movement. Over time, regular aerobic activity makes the heart and cardiovascular system stronger and fitter." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 2 1/2 hours of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week and muscle strengthening exercise at least twice a week for adults. Any improvement is a gain for good health, so get moving!



Reduce Stress

We all experience stress in our lives—having to take a test, child rearing, losing a job. Stress is a natural response that can sometimes be good, such as teaching us skills to protect us in life-threatening situations. But too much stress or stress that continues for an extended period of time can affect our health.

Some common reactions to a stressful event or environment include: trouble sleeping, difficulty making decisions, crying, and feeling powerless. Some ways to help manage stress include:

- Eating a healthy diet
- Staying active, to keep your mind off the stressor
- Spending time with friends and loved ones to avoid isolation
- Avoiding drugs and alcohol, which may be a temporary but in the long-run can create more problems and add to stress
- Seeking support, such as from a family member, friend, clergyperson, or counselor.

To learn more, visit www.cdc.gov/Features/HandlingStress/.

Control Alcohol Consumption

Excessive alcohol use can actually shorten your life. Alcohol has been linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, cancer (specifically of the breast, mouth, throat, esophagus, liver and colon), learning and memory problems including dementia, and mental health problems including anxiety and depression.

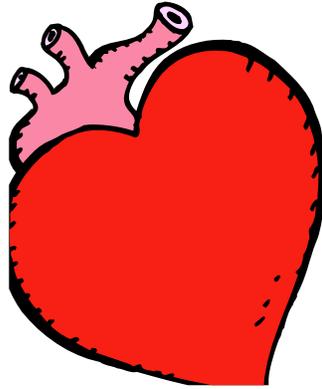
Excessive drinking includes binge drinking, drinking while pregnant, underage drinking, and 8 or more drinks per week for women and 15 or more drinks per week for men. Excessive alcohol use also leads to 88,000 deaths each year in the U.S. and is the third leading cause of preventable death.

To learn more, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/alcohol/.



American Heart Month and Go Red for Women

February is American Heart Month, and it has been celebrated since 1963 to raise awareness about heart disease and how to prevent it. February 6th this year is National Wear Red Day, a day to help raise awareness that heart disease is the #1 killer of women in the United States. Make a New Year's resolution to improve your heart health and talk with your doctor. For more info go to www.heart.org or www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/.



Too much salt can lead to high blood pressure which increases your chances of heart problems. Find out how much salt is in your food and its effect on your health. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more information at www.cdc.gov/salt/.

Do you know the importance of having your blood pressure checked? Know your numbers. Recommended blood pressure is 120/80 or less for healthy people, 140/90 or less if you have a health condition and are monitored by a doctor. High blood pressure is a risk factor for heart disease. For more information talk to your doctor and visit www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/.

Having a high level of cholesterol in your blood can put you at risk of developing heart disease. Cholesterol can affect people of all ages and backgrounds. For more information talk to your doctor and visit www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/.

The risk factors for heart disease include:

- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- not enough physical activity
- being overweight
- smoking, and
- too much salt in your diet
- family history

Make 2015 a healthier year and lower your risk of heart disease. For more information, visit www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdpc/hdsp.htm.

Flu Season

The annual influenza (flu) season is underway. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) recently announced that the strain of flu that is infecting most people so far this season in the U.S. (the Influenza A [H3N2] strain) is not an exact match to this year's vaccine. Currently many states are experiencing widespread flu activity.

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) is encouraging any New Hampshire residents who have not yet received their vaccination this year to do so. The flu vaccine is still the single best protection against the flu, and CDC does believe it will also. It is also helpful in reducing the length and severity of illness if someone does get the flu.

"We want to make sure that New Hampshire residents are as well protected as possible against the flu and the best preventive step is still to get vaccinated," said Dr. José Montero, Director of Public Health at DPHS. "It is also important that if you do think you have the flu to speak with your healthcare provider as soon as possible. Taking antiviral medication shortly after becoming ill can help reduce the length and severity of illness and the likelihood of hospitalization."

Through their surveillance system, which New Hampshire participates in, the CDC is noticing that the H3N2 influenza A strain of the virus is the most common one so far this year, and Influenza A strains tend to cause worse flu seasons with higher rates of hospitalization and death, especially in the very young and very old and those with chronic medical conditions.



It is especially important that those at higher risk for influenza complications be vaccinated. These groups include:

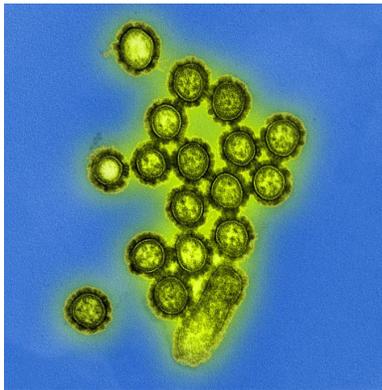
- Children aged 6 months through 4 years of age
- Pregnant women
- Adults 65 years of age or older
- People who are immunosuppressed
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, including asthma, heart disease, diabetes, or chronic lung disease.

People who live with or care for those at high risk of flu complications should also be vaccinated including:

- Health care workers
- Household contacts of persons at high risk of complications from the flu
- Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children younger than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated).

Additionally, since there is flu circulating that may be different from the vaccine strains, it is also important for patients to seek medical attention if they develop more serious illness or are in a group of people who are at higher risk of complications from infection, because there are antiviral medications that can be administered to shorten symptoms and help prevent more serious illness and complications. These medications are more effective the sooner they are administered after developing symptoms.

Influenza can be a serious disease of the lungs, nose, and throat. The illness is spread from person to person through contact with respiratory secretions including through coughing and sneezing. Typical flu symptoms include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. An average of 23,000 people die each year in the United States due to influenza. The vaccine itself does not give you the flu and is very safe.



For more information about influenza and the vaccine, contact the DHHS Immunization Program at 603-271-4482 or the Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-0279. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov or the DHHS website at www.dhhs.nh.gov for more information.

Listeria Outbreak Linked to Caramel Apples

As of this writing, a total of 32 people from 11 states have been infected with the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes* in this outbreak. Thirty-one people have been hospitalized and 6 deaths have been reported, though none in New Hampshire. *Listeria* can cause a serious, life-threatening illness whose symptoms include diarrhea, stomach pain, fever, and muscle aches.

The NH Department of Health and Human Services is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which is investigating the outbreak in collaboration with public health officials in affected states and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The outbreak is linked to commercially produced, prepackaged caramel apples.

Three voluntary recalls of caramel apples have been announced by Happy Apples, California Snack Foods, and Merb's Candies after hearing from Bidart Brothers, an apple supplier, that there may be a connection between Bidart Brothers apples and this listeriosis outbreak. U.S. consumers are recommended to not eat any commercially produced, prepackaged caramel apples, including plain caramel apples and those containing nuts, sprinkles, chocolate, or other toppings, until more specific guidance can be provided.



This investigation is rapidly evolving, and new information will be provided as it becomes available. For more information, visit the [CDC website](http://www.cdc.gov).